(b) The average price realisation per metric tonne for wheat exports at Indian Ports comes to US$ 182.35 (FOB) approximately. The average C&F cost of imported wheat at Indian Ports comes to US$ 173 per metric tonne.

(c) Import of wheat was necessitated due to fall in production of foodgrains during 1995-96 crop and the consequent shortfall in procurement for the Central Pool.

Hike in Prices of Essential Commodities

1533. SHRI RAM GOPAL YADAV:
SHRI ISH DUTT YADAV:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whetherr Government adhere to the policy of maintaining the prices of essential commodities meant for the common man; and

(b) if so, in what manner the price hike of sugar, wheat and rice is to be explained?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government have taken a number of steps to control the prices of essential commodities. In order to augment the supply of wheat, action has been taken to import wheat upto 2 million tonnes through State Trading Corporation. Apart from certain long term measures to increase the production of essential commodities, imports of commodities which are in short supply are encouraged to augment the availability of these items. Some of the commodities are also supplied through the Public Distribution System and Cooperative Stores on below market prices. State Governments/Union Territory Administrations have been advised to take stringent action against hoarders and black marketeers and others indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, etc.

(b) The price rise of essential commodities like sugar, wheat and rice is in tune with the general inflatienary trend prevailing all over the country. Further, decline in production of wheat and increase in the Statutory Minimum Prices of these commodities, alongwith the hike in petroleum products, can be attributed to the increase in the prices of these commodities.

Procured Wheat Lying Open in Punjab

1534. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether after the last rabi crop a large quantity of procured wheat has been lying in the open, particularly in Punjab, due to lack of adquate warehousing capacity;

(b) whether Government have made adequate arrangements for the proper storage of wheat after the coming rabi crop season; and

(c) if so, the broad details thereof and in case adequate arrangements have not been made for the purpose, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and shall be laid on the Table of the House.

Encouraging new Sugar Units, A Food Disaster

1535. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item appearing in the Hindustan Times dated the 27th January, 1997, under the caption 'encouraging new sugar units is inviting a food disaster';

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of Government in regard thereto;

(c) whether Government are aware that due to large scale diversion of the

area under staple foods to commercial crops like sugarcane, cotton, oilseeds, foodgrains, the output growth rate has come down to minus 3.19% the lowest rate since the days of Green Revolution; and

(d) if so, the reasons for providing more incentives for setting up of sugar mills which would further lead diversion of the area?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir, The news report indicate that with the grant of incentives, large area under food crops like wheat and rice would get converted into sugarcane which would lead to a shortage of foodgrains.

The area under sugarcane is very small as compared to the area under foodgrain crop. The annual growth in foodgrains production during the period 1990-91 to 1996-97 has been 1.70 percent. For setting up new sugar mills, an investment of the order of Rs. 40 crores is required and therefore, incentives by way of increased quota of freesale sugar is necessary to enable them to repay their term loans.

चीनी मिलों का बंद किया जाना

1536. **श्री इकबाल सिंह:** क्या **खाद्य** मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) विगत तीन वर्षों के दौरान अब-तक देश के विभिन्न राज्यों में स्थित चीनी मिलों को कब-कब बंद किया गया और इनके बंद करने के क्या कारण हैं;

(ख) क्या यह भी सच है कि संबंधित चीनी मिलें बंद हो जाने के कारण किसान अपनी गन्ने की फसल को नहीं बेच सके और अंततः उन्हें गन्ने की फसल में आग लगानी पड़ी, जिससे राष्ट्र को काफी नुकसान हुआ;

(ग) इससे देश के कितने किसानों को कितनी क्षति हुई और इनकी क्षतिपूर्ति किस प्रकार की गई; और

(घ) ऐसी सभी चीनी मिलों के विरुद्ध सरकार ने क्या-क्या कार्यवाही की; और यदि नहीं, तो सरकार देश के किसानों के हितों की रक्षा के लिए क्या उपाय कर रही है?

खाद्य मंत्री तथा नागरिक आपूर्ति, उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री (श्री देवेन्द्र प्रसाद यादव): (क) से (घ) अपेक्षित सूचना सम्बंधित राज्यों से एकत्र की जा रही है।

Sugarcane price due to Growers

1537. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) the arrears of sugarcane prices due to growers on the eve of the current years' crushing season, in Maharashtra, U.P. and other States and in the country as a whole;

(b) the amount of the arrears which has been paid this year; and

(c) the steps being taken to ensure full clearance of arrears before crushing starts for the next season?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (b) As per the information received from the sugar mills, the cane price arrears due to the sugarcane growers for the sugar season 1995-96 (October-September) as on the eve of the current crushing season i.e. on 30.9.1996 were Rs. 707.30 crores and the amount paid to the farmers during the current 1996-97 crushing season out of the balance to be paid pertaining to the season 1995-96 as on 15.1.1997 was Rs. 396.22 crores.

(c) The responsibility for ensuring timely payments of cane price dues lies with the State Governments which have the necessary powers and field organisations to enforce such payments. The Central Government, on its part, has taken measures for improving the